

Article

The Effect of Oral Test Preparation on Reducing English Learners' Speaking Anxiety: A Case Study of Chinese College Students

Qinchun Jiang ^{1,*}

¹ Guilin Institute of Information Technology, Guilin, Guangxi, China

* Correspondence: Qinchun Jiang, Guilin Institute of Information Technology, Guilin, Guangxi, China

Abstract: This survey conspicuously investigates the impact of unwritten test preparation on reducing verbalise anxiousness among Chinese college students acquire English as a foreign language. To search how different preparation strategies, influence anxiety levels and language performance outcomes, the research combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. A methods approach was utilise in which quantitative information was hoard through a questionnaire accommodate from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), while qualitative insights were garner through structured interview with participant. The findings unveil that practice sessions, mock tests. And individualize feedback are the most strategy in alleviating verbalize anxiousness and improving student confidence. Due to heightened awareness of their limitations and performance gaps, yet, for some students, intensive readying paradoxically increases anxiety levels. The study spotlights the demand for targeted preparation programs that address the specific psychological and pedagogic needs of educatee who are particularly prone to foreign language anxiety. To the broader understanding of foreign language anxiety in contexts, this research brings and offers practical, evidence-ground recommendations for pedagogue to raise language teaching practices and support student -being.

Keywords: speaking anxiousness; unwritten test preparation; foreign language learning; Chinese college students; Motley method

1. Introduction

The procedure of learn a new language oftentimes regard important challenges, especially when it come to speaking [1]. For English learners, mouth anxiety is a problem that can impede their ability to pass and reach language proficiency. Speaking anxiety, often refer to as communication apprehension, fear of negative rating, or test anxiety, manifest as a psychological and emotional response that impedes learners' ability to do efficaciously in oral communication contexts. This research explores the upshot of unwritten test preparation on reducing English learners verbalize anxiousness, centre on Chinese college students as a case study.

2. Methodology

Research Design: This study employs a -methods research design to search how test preparation affects verbalise anxiousness among college students learning English [1], and sundry-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative data, allow for a more understanding of the research topic. In settings. Where combining data types can better capture the complexness of doings and learn outcome, this attack is particularly utile. Hoard both types of information at the same clip, canvass them singly, and so compare them to validate or transversal-verify the findings, the study follow a triangulation strategy.

Received: 18 March 2026

Revised: 01 May 2026

Accepted: 14 May 2026

Published: 21 May 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

This study employs a sundry-methods approach to defeat the limitations of both quantitative and research [2]. By combining the statistical deepness of quantitative method with the detailed context of data, it mensurate the impact of test preparation on verbalize anxiousness while likewise capturing the elaborated experiences of participants. This methodology enrich our discernment of the challenges see by Chinese college students, render findings that are both statistically solid and elaborated. In educational research. Where it is to understand the complexness of people behave and how acquire, this approach is valuable.

3. Results

This chapter exhibit quantitative findings examine via SPSS, utilizing statistics and frequency analysis [3]. Qualitative data will be thwartwise-referenced in the subsequent Discussion chapter.

Out of 114 allot questionnaire, 81 valid responses were canvas [4]. Participants include 43 non-English majors (53.1%) and 38 majors (46.9%). Proficiency levels were (46.9%) and progress (39.5%), followed by initiate (12.3%) and skilful (1.2%). IELTS mouth lashings clustered in the 6–6.5 orbit (55.6%), with others tally 7–7.5 (23.5%), 5–5.5 (14.8%), 4–4.5 (4.9%), and 8–8.5 (1.2%). 42% of respondent reported taking speaking tests "sometimes" and pass 1–3 month on preparation.

3.1. Common Sources of Speaking Anxiety

Through this questionnaire survey, it was launch that the immense bulk of respondent experience verbalize anxiety [5]. This patently is unmistakable from their feelings of jumpiness when verbalise in English, affright when mouth without readying, defeat when they cannot understand the teacher's corrections, experience more dying in English class compare to other topic, fright of being bemock by classmates when mouth, anxiousness when inquire enquiry without having set, and and even anxiousness when asked questions despite being good-prepared.

Information from Table 1 unveil that the fright of verbalize in front of others is a primary rootage of anxiousness, with 56.8% of participant concord or strongly concord with the statement. This restiveness oft stems from a want of confidence in language ability and a fear of negative rating from both peers and instructor [6]. These findings spotlight that fright of evaluation is a core component of foreign language anxiety.

Table 1. Frequency and comprehend effectuality of unwritten test preparation activities

Oral test preparation activity	Frequency (Number of responses)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Group discussions	34	15.7%	42.0%
Mock tests	49	22.7%	60.5%
One-on-one sessions with tutors	46	21.3%	56.8%
Role-playing	28	13.0%	34.6%
Oral practice	59	27.3%	72.8%

The most significant anxiety trigger place is the demand to speak without readying, and this caused panic in 74.1% of respondents. This high pct incontestably advise that students experience profoundly about their speaking skills. The fright of making grammatic error or neglect to evince ideas clearly under pressure curb their willingness to communicate [7]. This finding emphasizes that structured preparation and repeated practice are essential for building the confidence needed for spontaneous speech.

Moreover, the fear of negative rating rest a spectacular barrier. About 44.4% of participant account defeat when misunderstood teacher feedback occurred, thereby and 35.8% feared being bemock by their classmate [8]. Belike exasperate by a accent on

maintain societal harmony and avoid embarrassment, these concerns reflect a rise in sensitivity to peer judgment. Such pressures impact an educatee's willingness to participate in activity.

Eventually, 34.6% of respondents felt more dying in category compared to other academic subjects. Unlike topics that bank on learning or indite assessments, English classes need involvement and interpersonal communication [3]. Specially for pupils who remain of their competency, this demand to pursue can increase accent. Conjointly, these results instance that speaking anxiousness is in both the demand of the schoolroom and the students' internal fright of judgment.

3.2. The Impact of Oral Test Preparation on Reducing Anxiety

Participants evaluated assorted preparation activities ground on their comprehend effectiveness in cut anxiousness [9]. Frequency and effectiveness data are summarized in Table 1.

The top three most popular test preparation activities are adumbrating and explicate below [6].

Unwritten pattern (27.3%): This activity was launch to be the most. The cumulative pct indicates that 72.8% of students launch unwritten pattern to be an indispensable component of their preparation routine [10]. This high percentage palpably reflect how restate practice fosters familiarity and authority, heighten comfort levels in divers speaking contexts.

Mock tryout (22.7%): The next most preparation method was mock tests, select by 22.7% of the participant. These real exam conditions through time, scene. By familiarise 60.5% () of pupil with the testing environment, they cut the bullying associated with assessment [11].

One-on-one sessions with tutors (21.3%): Regard as by 56.8% (accumulative) of participant, these sessions offer personalized feedback and personalized attention. They mitigate anxiety by render targeted support found on each educatee's linguistic dispute [5].

3.3. Preferred Preparation Strategies

To palliate speaking anxiousness, participant prioritise practical, insistent. And feedback-point strategies. These preferences emphasize increased practice as the most effective method, followed by feedback from peers or tutors and familiarity with test formats [12].

The responses point a taste for practical, and feedback-point strategy. The top three most popular method to cut anxiousness during test preparation are outline and explicate.

Increased pattern (27.8%): As the most regarded method (85.2% accumulative taste), consistent pattern is irresistibly see as the key to cut anxiousness [10]. Sessions aid students internalize the language. This making spontaneous address less and enhancing overall comfortableness. This determination patently highlights the necessity of incorporate structured, pattern into language learning routines.

Feedback from peers/tutor (21.4%): Take by 21.4% of respondent (64.6% accumulative), this scheme emphasise the value of rectification. Feedback axiomatically allows educatee to place and address specific lingual fault. This is important for alleviating the fear of incompetency. Insight render a roadmap for advance, cut anxiety by further a sense of advancement [7].

Familiarity with Test Formats (20.6%): Take by 20.6% of pupil (63.0%), conversancy trims the precariousness that drive anxiety. Understanding exam expectations incontestably makes the test experience experience more manageable and less intimidating. This predilection advises that pedagogy should prioritise exposing pupil to divers test formats throughout the preparation phase.

3.4. Long-Term Benefits of Oral Test Preparation

If they noticed betterment in their verbalize anxiety and language performance over clip, revealing how their perception of verbalise English changed after pursue in test

preparation, to assess the long-term benefits of test preparation, participants were inquired. The data showed that consistent readying led to significant reductions in anxiousness and improvements in speaking sureness [13].

More positive percept (65.8%): The bulk of participant reported that their perception of mouth English get more positive after pursue in test preparation. This suggests that the preparation activities. This may include increase pattern, conversance with test formats, and feedback from compeer or tutor, effectively reduced anxiousness and improved authority [11]. These positive changes belike stem from pupil feeling more prepared and less anxious, adjust with old findings that increase pattern and feedback are efficacious in reducing mouth anxiety. The development of a more positive mindset indicates that pupil not only felt better fit to deal exams but likewise see a greater sense of accomplishment and self-assurance when speaking English in general.

No modification in perception (25.0%): A quartern of the respondent point that their percept of verbalize English rest unchanged despite the test preparation. This group might include pupil who possessed a certain level of sureness or comfort with mouth English and launch that the readying did not alter their perception. It could too include educatee who may have required more intensive or tailored preparation to notice a modification in their perception. This finding axiomatically suggest that while standard test preparation methods gain most educatee, they may not be for all, highlight the need for point attack that address pupil' demand.

More negative percept (4.2%): A little group of participant, correspond 4.2%, felt more negative about speaking English after ready for tests. Because the preparation process rise their knowingness of weaknesses or fright of failure, this may be. For these educatee, the focus on performance could have increased their anxiety of alleviating it. While unwritten test preparation mostly aid, it might aggravate anxiety levels for some educatee. Identifying these educatee early and providing them with extra support or substitute strategy could aid palliate these negative effects.

4. Discussion

4.1. Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

The findings plainly unveil that mouth anxiousness is a important issue among Chinese college students learning English. Plentitude of pupil who reported experience nervous when speaking English without preparation aligns with research on foreign language anxiety. From a fright of negative evaluation, this anxiousness oftentimes stems, as evidenced by participant who expressed concerns about being judge by their compeer or making error in front of others. For representative, Zhou, a non-English major educatee, typed his responses via WeChat messages because he was too dying to mouth English in forepart of others, even during an interview without the camera on. As he pointed out in the interview:

When I take to verbalise English without any readying, I experience real and my mind sometimes get. It is difficult for me to bump the right words. And I am always worry that I will say something incorrect [2, 3].

This statement highlight how not being prepared increases anxiousness. The interview data present that want of readying do greater anxiousness, conduct to a fright of do fault and a tendency to avoid mouth. Furthermore, the scene of unwritten tests exacerbates this anxiousness. Celia (a non-major student) described feeling "anxious and accentuate" during tryout due to the fright of being judged on language skills. This observation palpably is with the cognitive-behavioral theory. This postulate that anxiety can impair performance by increase self-focus and reducing cognitive resource for task execution. When students worry too much about how others see them, their centering on the project fall [10]. This increase self-consciousness incontestably leads to a round where the pressure to do well, combine with low confidence in their language skills, do it even harder for them to defeat their anxiety.

Cultural factor also plays a part in increase verbalize anxiousness among pupil. In society, there is supererogatory pressure to succeed academically. This adds to the anxiousness in acquire a language. This focus on high accomplishment makes pupil more to the possibility of neglect or do fault [1, 10], and mia (an English major student) reflect on this, tell:

I think my English level is far from the native speakers, so I lack confidence and am afraid of making mistakes [11, 13].

This statement instance how the fear of negative rating is frozen in values. The potency for embarrassment or loss of face—an important construct in many Asiatic cultures—can do the experience of speaking in a foreign language especially scare for Chinese educatee. The pressure to "relieve face" and avoid failure is not a feeling. It is oft reinforced by the and societal environment in which these students run. The cultural emphasis on flawlessness and fright of public embarrassment can escalate speaking anxiety, in high-stakes situations like test. This dimension plays a critical part in shaping how Chinese students see and react to language learning challenges.

The study apparently highlights several key factor that bring to verbalize anxiousness among college students: fright of negative rating, want of readying, the formal scene of unwritten tests, and pressure. These factor are interconnecting and bring to the high level of anxiousness discover in this survey. Understanding these underlying cause is important for develop efficacious strategy to aid educatee manage their anxiety and ameliorate their English-verbalise acquirement.

4.2. The Role of Oral Test Preparation in Alleviating Anxiety

It is that test preparation play a important role in cut English verbalise anxiety among college students in this research. Regular oral practice emerged as the most effective strategy, with 72.8% of participants reporting that it helped alleviate their anxiety. This is support by insight from the interview [12]. Jade, an English major educatee, spotlight the value of practice, say:

Do topic that I cognise might come up in the tryout do me experience more and when it was time for the test.

This statement indubitably exhibits the common belief among educatee that pattern boost authority and lessen the fright of do mistakes during unwritten tryout. As a highly preparation strategy, mock tests were likewise place. By replicating existent exam conditions, mock test permit students to become familiar with the formatting and outlook of the tryout. This helps to reduce the uncertainty that oft drive anxiousness. Amy, a non-major student, shared:

One scheme that has aid me is do in forepart of a camera and recording myself, like it is a existent test situation. This quintessentially allows me to discover my error and meliorate without the pressures of an audience.

This plainly is similar to observation that conversancy with the test format can cut the burden on students. This permit them to pore more on the content of their response instead than on the construction or timing of the test, thereby palliate anxiousness [5].

The interview also reveals that not all educatee see trim anxiousness through readying. Some of them stated a more negative percept of verbalize English after readying. As Li, an English major student, designate out:

Because I was upset about not being enough, even though I prepared a lot, I still felt real dying. I desire to be perfect when verbalize English because I conceive I have reach a grade, you cognise, I am major in English [1, 10].

This suggest that for some pupil, readying can increase anxiousness by do them more cognisant of their perceived limitation or by add pressure to do utterly [6]. Increased self-awareness during readying can sometimes conduct to heightened anxiousness, for assimilator. Guide to a cycle of ego-dubiety and anxiousness, for these pupil, the pressure to see high standards can eclipse the benefit of readying.

4.3. Further Discussion of Preferred Preparation Strategies and Their Impact

The survey places several unwritten test preparation strategies that pupil launch in trim their speaking anxiousness. Among these, increase practice time manifestly was the most favour, with 85.2% of participants signal it as. This predilection for pattern is - support by be research on language learning. This emphasizes the importance of retell exposure and pattern in develop language proficiency [11]. In the interview, Mia shared:

The most efficacious scheme for me is to hold do. I quintessentially care to encounter opportunities to pass in English in my daily life. To somebody, for representative, I speak in a store or order nutrient in a eatery, and this do me more speaking English in exams or formal situation.

Also, Zhou, who has been struggling with strong speaking anxiety, presented his experience:

I often practice with my friends in a relaxed environment. It really helps me feel more comfortable and less nervous when speaking English.

Those responses unmistakably show the value of do in a low-pressure setting. This allows pupil to make sureness and cut anxiousness without the fear of being judge. Another strategy that have strong support was feedback from peers or tutor. Feedback permit students to place and right their mistakes. This not just meliorate their language skills but boost their authority. Li quintessentially accentuate this point in the interview:

Acquire feedback from my instructor or classmates helped me understand what I was do wrongfulness and how to fix it. It does me experience more prepared and less dying about English presentation or tryout.

This statement patently emphasise the importance of individualised feedback in alleviating anxiousness and raise pupil' preparation for exam. Conversance with the test format was likewise spotlight as an efficacious scheme, as it is too citing in the last subdivision. Knowing what to expect in a test can significantly cut the precariousness that often drive anxiety, and this allowing educatee to approach the tryout with greater sureness. On this, Celia share her experience in the interview, saying:

For the theme try in past exam, before the scrutiny, I seek. So I practiced one topic each day. At foremost, I unmistakably indite corresponding answers to each query, and so I recite the response to train myself. Besides, I utilise my telephone to enter my response so that I could identify job with my pronunciation and grammar to meliorate. To enrich my face. Additionally, I accumulated some phrases. Because of this preparation period, I had a somewhat good performance in the terminal unwritten tryout.

This insight present how conversance with test content and construction can aid pupil manage their anxiety more efficaciously [10]. In, while strategies such as increased practice, feedback, and conversance with the test format are mostly efficacious in cut verbalize anxiousness, it is important to recognise that different pupil hold different demand. By adopting a more personalized attack to readying, pedagog can better support all educatee in manage their anxiousness and meliorate their performance in exam.

5. Conclusion

The survey can take and pedagogic implication. To the theme on language anxiety (FLA), the findings of this survey bestow by providing empiric grounds on the anxiety experienced by Chinese college students during oral tests. Research has established that FLA is a important barrier to language acquisition. By highlighting the challenge face by educatee, as the emphasis on accomplishment and fright of negative rating. This aggravate mouth anxiousness, this survey also heightens the discernment. The study supports the cognitive-theory of anxiousness; this posit that anxiety impairs performance by increasing self-focus and trim the resource available for task execution. The information, the educatee' reflections on their anxiousness during unwritten tryout, provide nuanced insights into how anxiousness occur in high-stakes language learning environments. This support the thought that anxiousness is not a psychological barrier but too a cognitive one, impact the way students treat and produce language. To the understanding of language learning strategies, hence furthermore, the survey add. It emphasizes the importance of preparation strategies, as regular practice, mock tests, and

feedback that can palliate the cognitive burden colligate with verbalise anxiousness. By lessen the cognitive demand on assimilator, familiarity with language tasks can reduce anxiousness.

The entailment of this survey are important, for educators and policymakers regard in English language instruction for Chinese educatee. The survey suggests the demand for incorporating structured unwritten test preparation into language learning courses. Given that pattern and mock tryout were place as the most efficacious strategy for reducing anxiety, pedagog should assure that educatee hold opportunities to pursue in these activities. This could include incorporate more unwritten practice sessions, render access to mock test resources, and offering personalized feedback from tutor. The findings also advise that test preparation should be design to the specific needs of pupil. Not all students gain as from the same preparation methods; a one-size-fits-all attack may not be sufficient. Pedagog should view incorporate flexible preparation programs that permit for personalised support, as relaxation techniques or cognitive-strategies, to help educatee who are prone to anxiousness. The survey quintessentially highlights the importance of create a supportive learning environment where educatee experience comfy do their speaking skills. Interview data reveal that pupil benefit from do in low-pressure settings, such as with friend or in small grouping. Where they do not experience. This quintessentially suggest that pedagogue should foster a classroom culture that further endangerment-pickings and perspective fault as part of the learning process, instead than as failure to be avoid. Eventually, the study's findings hold implication for language assessment practices. Given the important impact of verbalize anxiousness on educatee' performance, it is important that tryout is design in a way that minimizes anxiety-inducing factor. This could regard offer practice tests that mimic the actual test conditions. This providing guideline on what to expect; and ensuring that pupil is familiar with the test format in progression.

References

1. A. C. S. Chang and J. Read, "Reducing listening test anxiety through various forms of listening support," *TESL-EJ*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. n1, 2008.
2. Y. Aida, "Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 78, no. 2, pp. 155-168, 1994.
3. A. Bandura, "Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change," *Psychological Review*, vol. 84, no. 2, p. 191, 1977.
4. S. Vanniarajan, "Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know by Rebecca L. Oxford," *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1990.
5. G. Chen, S. M. Gully, J. A. Whiteman, and R. N. Kilcullen, "Examination of relationships among trait-like individual differences, state-like individual differences, and learning performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 85, no. 6, p. 835, 2000.
6. M. Liu, "Interactive effects of English-speaking anxiety and strategy use on oral English test performance of high-and low-proficient Chinese university EFL learners," *Cogent Education*, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 1562410, 2018.
7. H. T. D. Huang and S. T. A. Hung, "Comparing the effects of test anxiety on independent and integrated speaking test performance," *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 244-269, 2013.
8. J. V. Abad, S. O. Arango, and M. V. Restrepo, "Perceptions of the influence of anxiety on students' performance on English oral examinations," *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos (Colombia)*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 143-167, 2021.
9. W. Zhang and M. Liu, "Evaluating the impact of oral test anxiety and speaking strategy use on oral English performance," *Journal of Asia TEFL*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2013.
10. N. Shomoossi, Z. Kassaian, and S. Ketabi, "Variation of test anxiety over listening and speaking test performance," *Iranian Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 65-78, 2009.
11. F. Kustiyandari and U. N. L. Sulistyani, "Speaking anxiety in oral presentation-based assessment: Factors and strategies," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 155-162, 2025.
12. A. S. Sinta, "Speaking anxiety among EFL students during oral exams in the 'Speaking for Tourism' course," Doctoral dissertation, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2026.
13. S. D. Orak, "The effect of oral exam styles on students' speaking anxiety: A case study."

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Publisher and/or the editor(s). Publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.